

Inspection report for Newington Children's Centre

Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	383785
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

Centre leader	Louise Hill
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Princess Margaret Avenue, Ramsgate, CT12 6HX
Telephone number	01843 855570
Fax number	01843 855571
Email address	Louise.hill@kent.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Newington Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Growing Together Childcare Centre EY380111

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Report published: June 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the manager of the centre in conjunction with the partner manager, who also works with the other three children's centres within the Thanet area. They also met with other staff and representatives from the local authority, including health service professionals. A brief meeting was also held with the headteacher of the adjoining primary school. Inspectors talked to parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including data and evaluations of services, safeguarding arrangements, case studies, development plans and the centre's review reports.

Information about the centre

Newington Children's Centre opened in September 2008 under phase one of the Sure Start programme and is open for 51 weeks a year from Monday to Friday. Since the end of Sure Start funding, the local authority now finances and governs the provision. The centre also has an advisory group and parents' forum that provides additional direction to the leadership and management of the centre. The centre is housed in purpose-built accommodation, sharing the site with Newington Primary School. The centre hosts a nursery which is subject to its own inspection.

The children's centre reach area includes the Newington and Northwood areas of Ramsgate, but some families attend from the wider community outside the reach area. The population is largely White British, with just a few families from minority ethnic groups, especially those from Eastern European and Turkish heritages.

Families are very often facing challenging life circumstances. Levels of deprivation are very high. Within the reach area, 50% of families are in workless households and therefore a much higher than average proportion receive benefits. Many families in the area are lone parents. A few children and parents have disabilities and/or special educational needs; data for this shows an increasing trend.

Currently, 1180 parents and children are registered with the centre and attendance rates from within the reach are rapidly increasing, being around 70% of the reach area, with the addition of others who are signposted to the centre from outside the reach area or are registered at one of the four other centres in the cluster. The management team work with a small cluster of other children’s centres in order to target specific support. The centre meets all elements of the core purpose, which include integrated childcare, health services, family support and outreach and activities to promote children’s and parents’ all-round development and well-being.

When children join the centre for crèche, other activities or the nursery, it is not unusual for their levels of skills and knowledge on entry to be much lower than would normally be expected.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

1

Main findings

This outstanding centre meets parents’ and children’s needs very well. The local community has grown to trust and value highly the work of the centre, with 100% of all families satisfied with the service for four years in succession.

The quality of care and guidance is outstanding. As a result of the extremely well-tailored support, individual needs are fully met and children are safe and protected. The very impressive outreach and partnerships with others aid provision. There is unanimous agreement that the centre helps parents to improve their parenting skills so that they bond better with their children and are able to cope with the challenges of life more successfully. Nonetheless, in times of crisis, staff go out of their way to do what parents call ‘the extra little things that make the difference’.

The centre is exceptionally successful in helping lone and teenage parents and in helping to improve the safety of families as well as readiness and success in finding employment. The centre is making considerable headway in including fathers, especially lone fathers. Plans are in place to have more Saturday events in the future, as families have requested this. The centre is reaching out to minority ethnic groups well, so that attendance rates, especially for health and baby sensory development activities, are beginning to improve rapidly; this remains a focus of the centre. Overall, the extent to which parents enjoy and achieve personal and social development is outstanding.

The centre fully achieves its mission statement. As one parent put it, 'The centre makes the community stronger'; inspectors endorse this view. Parents' confidence in the centre is summed up by the following comments: 'The staff are not judgemental, always there and a great support, making a massively positive difference to my life', 'The centre gives me a reason to get up and have umph' and, 'Everyone is very knowledgeable and they know us.'

A very notable success of the centre is its contribution to the huge improvement in children's levels of attainment by the age of five. In addition, there are highly successful training programmes for adults. Parents have a considerable 'voice' in shaping the direction of the training and overall provision within the centre.

Outstanding leadership and highly effective teamwork ensure that the range of provision is very well targeted on the promotion of health, education and friendship. Provision to help children to learn and develop is enhanced by the use of many interesting activities. However, opportunities for outdoor learning are hampered by the small enclosed play area. Aided by strong governance, effective self-evaluation and challenging target-setting, the centre is constantly improving the outcomes for families. The numbers using the centre are rising rapidly. Safeguarding procedures and the centre's capacity to improve are outstanding

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Maintain the strong emphasis on increasing the uptake of services by families from minority ethnic groups and by providing some Saturday events for families, especially fathers.
- Find ways to make the outside play area, which is linked to the crèche, more spacious.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Outcomes are outstanding overall, because the large majority of families in the reach attend regularly and benefit from the services provided.

The centre is especially successful in helping parents from a wide range of target groups to gain qualifications. For example, parents asked for help with their literacy skills. This has led to a group taking a qualification equal to a GCSE 'C' grade. Not only were 100% successful in this, but this has resulted in a further request for mathematics. They explained how they are all keen to have 'proper qualifications' to increase their employment opportunities and to support their children. As one explained, 'I'm trying to find work; the course motivates me'.

For some families, parents are helped to find work for the first time in their lives, breaking a three-generation history of being in workless families. Notable achievements include the 100% success rate in gaining specialist breastfeeding qualifications, linked to the University of Greenwich. As a result, 14 new volunteers now help midwives with breastfeeding support. Since 2008, the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding to eight weeks has risen from 5%, to 21% in 2011 and is currently at 42% for the centre's most recent data for 2012. This means that the rate of breastfeeding has risen from well below average to become close to average.

Those who have attended the childminders' course have all gained a Level 3 qualification, with 25% finding work. Case study evidence shows that the food hygiene and first aid courses are also very popular. Not only do these help people to find work linked to food preparation but they are helping parents to understand more about being safe. Admissions to accident and emergency, from within this reach and centre, have fallen by 50% in the last four years.

Obesity has been a big issue for the reach area. The target for its reduction has been exceeded, taking rates from well above average at 13% in 2009 to a little better than average, currently at 7.9%. There has been an increase in rates of immunisation due to the multiagency support from the health team and special projects run by a local branch of Asda. In addition, there has been a concerted effort to help people to stop smoking. Although the rates remain high in the reach area, in the last year 68 people have given up by linking support through health, library and centre signposting to support for mothers and fathers. There remains a concerted focus on this aspect of health in the drive to make health outcomes outstanding in the future.

Case studies evidence show that arrangements for the use of the Common Assessment Framework result in very high quality safeguarding support. This includes a very strong partnership between social and health workers as well as with the school. When needed, children are quickly put on child protection plans. The health team noted that there has been a massive reduction in caseloads linked to safeguarding at the beginning of primary education due to the early intervention.

The work of the centre is focused on closing the attainment gap between the bottom 20% of children and the rest very effectively. In 2007, (just before the centre opened), at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, no more than 28% of children reached the expected levels in basic communication skills; worse still, this

was as low as 13% for reading and 6% for writing. Over four years, children’s personal development, speaking, reading, writing and basic number skills have rapidly improved, so that the large majority begin Year 1 of the four feeder primary school at the expected levels.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	1

How good is the provision?

1

The outstanding provision ensures that the centre is successfully meeting the needs of families in the reach and the wider community. The centre listens to parents’ ideas and assesses their needs very carefully. A large majority of families benefit from having their lives improved because they are listened to on a one-to-one basis, receive home visits and benefit from training and fun activities. Parents value the work of the community involvement workers (CIWs) and the ‘PALs’ who support, families very well with personal, medical, educational and emotional needs. Not least, they help parents to get out of their often lonely homes. As one said, ‘I love it. I have made so many friends. My child is learning new things all the time in the crèche.’

The centre uses a wide range of strategies to improve the outcomes for families. The ‘Incredible Years’ course, for example, is highly successful in helping parents to learn how to promote their children’s language development and ensure that they manage behaviour positively. As one noted, ‘It has helped me to play with my child and given me brilliant ideas and now I have just applied to be a volunteer helper.’ ‘Messy Rock and Roll’ is immense fun and helps parents to see how children learn in a creative way using different sensory experiences; this impacts very well on children’s creative and language development. Sensory play and baby massage, at an early age, helps mothers and fathers to communicate very positively with their babies. The centre makes a huge difference to the lives of teenage parents and has

successfully included all of them in the reach area. In addition, they are now bringing along others from the wider community. As one teenage mother explained, 'Before coming here, I just cried at home. Now, it's a relief getting the help – wow, it's great!'

The centre is making considerable headway in including fathers. For lone fathers, the centre provides an invaluable 'lifeline'. They explained for example how the centre helps them to access benefits.

The centre is quick to respond to parents' needs when providing home safety checks. Free safety aids, such as stair gates and electric socket covers, are available. This integrated support contributes much to the reduction of minor and sometimes more serious injuries.

Although parents enjoy the many opportunities to attend outside activities in the fresh air, which is important as many live in flats without gardens, they would like even more fitness activities. Parents greatly value the free healthy snacks. Several commented that they cannot often afford fruit on their family budget.

The support for sexual and mental health is very impressive. As a consequence, there has been a considerable fall in the rate of second births for teenage mothers. Parents greatly value the 'drop in' services to health visitor and midwives.

The proportion of carers attending courses is constantly rising. Almost all who attended the 'Teaching Assistant' course went into the world of work either in paid jobs or as volunteers. Parents agree that the course helped them to understand how young children learn while also empowering their confidence and social skills.

The increased emphasis on enjoying stories and books has been strengthened by a superb scheme that allows parents and children to buy a book for £1. These are books that often sell for £6 or more in the high street shops. Parents commented very favourably about the excellent book sessions. For example, 'The Bear Event' was popular, with dressing up and a bear hunt. Everyone went home with a pack of rhymes, a free book and activities to do. The emphasis on speaking, using book language, sets a very strong base for children's future reading development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leaders at all levels have the promotion of inclusion and equality of opportunity at the heart of their work. Diversity is embraced, with an increasing range of leaflets in different languages. Leaders are correctly working to ensure that those from Turkish and Eastern European heritages also take part in a very wide range of activities beyond the basic health and baby sensory activities. Improvement plans have been carefully modified to target very specific areas for improvement. For example, there has been a very effective focus on better identifying and meeting the needs of the growing number of disabled children and/or families and those with special educational needs. Links with '4 Us 2' charity and 'Greenbanks' aid the support for this group. Gay, lesbian and transgender people and their families are included in the life of the centre.

The development plan focuses clearly on improving the lives of all families, including target groups, and there are well-focused challenging targets which are being met in almost all instances. The centre provides very good value for money, runs extremely smoothly on a day-to-day basis and uses its resources effectively to meet the needs of the reach area and wider community.

Governance has further strengthened in the last year, due to the inclusion of a wide range of knowledgeable professionals and better use of data. The parents' forum is over-subscribed at the moment, with a waiting list.

Highly integrated multi-agency partnerships ensure that provision is highly integrated; this is especially so for child protection and safeguarding arrangements. All staff are well trained on safeguarding matters and procedures to ensure that the safe recruitment of staff (CRB checks) are fully understood and followed. Staff ensure that the environment is safe, with regular training on how to ensure this. The 'Team around the family' is very effective, with very good communication about the needs of families. For example, the centre gains parents' confidence to talk about domestic violence and then ensures that it helps. The centre has detailed case study evidence showing families' all-round development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its	2

statutory duties	
The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The information about the attainment of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which was gained through discussions with the qualified teacher and from local authority data.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Newington Children’s Centre on 14–15 June 2012. We judged the centre to be outstanding and making a very significant contribution to the local community. We know that you agree, having seen your comments about how it has made such a difference to your lives. Many of you told us that the staff are very kind, non-judgemental and welcoming; a view that inspectors endorse completely.

Like you, we are very impressed with the way that the centre works with you in your homes, helping to meet your individual needs very well. The centre is very well led and managed by a team of skilled and highly committed staff. Through the parents’ forum, and by volunteering, you also make a massive contribution to the centre. Partnerships with different organisations are outstanding particularly through the links with midwives and health visitors. The Community Involvement Workers (CIWs) and PALS do a superb job.

You often spoke about the fantastic help that you receive and how the centre is a lifeline to you, especially for dads, lone parents and teenager parents. The centre is welcoming to families from different cultural backgrounds and, with your further help, leaders are hoping to get even more families from Eastern European and Turkish backgrounds to be fully involved in all activities.

The work of the centre helps you to learn many new parenting skills, and helps you to gain qualifications, jobs and guidance about life in general. Certainly, you also have lots of fun, which is good news, as you are building up a very strong network of friends within the community. You explained that staff quickly respond to your comments and ideas by altering services. They know that you would like more activities for fathers especially at weekends, and plans are underway for this.

You will be delighted to know that the arrangements for keeping you and your children safe are outstanding. You do well in developing healthy lifestyles. We were especially impressed by the way in which so many of you are continuing to breastfeed and also how the community is working to reduce obesity – congratulations! The volunteer breastfeeding support is very successful. The care, guidance and support provided by the centre are superb, and you agree. We were especially impressed in the way that the centre supports families in times of crisis.

We enjoyed seeing several of the activities, such as 'Messy Rock and Roll', the 'Baby Sensory' session and your mathematical course of study. You told us that you really value the Incredible Years programme and the Book events and we also agree that they help your children to develop quickly. These activities clearly show how you gain much from the courses and activities. There are very good opportunities for you to learn life-changing skills linked to getting back to work. You will be delighted to know that since the centre opened, children's long-term development has improved considerably.

Leaders set ambitious targets to improve and everyone is focused on making the centre as successful as possible for you. Leaders are always looking at ways to improve and they agree that there is a need to have greater access to a more spacious outside play area in the crèche, so that you and your children have can enjoy even more outside activities together.

Your contributions to the inspection were greatly appreciated and we would like to thank those of you who took the time to meet with us. Thank you for your willingness to talk with us about some of your personal experiences.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.